PITTA

Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 21 Number 9 September 2024

ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING: Saturday, September 14, 2024, 5.00PM: Hotel Tourism Plaza, Begumpet, Hyderabad. Coordinator(s): Sudhir Moorti (Mobile: 96522-83335), Gokul Krishna Addanki (Mobile: 99453-46585)

A detailed announcement will be sent by email.

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, September 29, 2024, 6.45AM: Narsapur Reserve Forest, Medak Dist. Meeting Point(s): Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 05:00AM; Opposite Dindigul Air Force Station, Hyderabad-Medak Road, 05:50AM. Trip Coordinator(s): Gurukumar KR (Mobile: 96188-27407)

Located in Medak District, Narsapur Forest is about 50km from Hyderabad and its range is spread over 3500 hectares. The forest has a diverse range of flora and wildlife, and it has various natural rock formations and ponds. It is a dry deciduous forest known for several medicinal plants. The highlight of the forest is a cosy lake tucked away in the heart of it where we can just sit by to admire the serenity and tranquillity of the place while observing waterfowl. Watch for Jerdon's Nightjar, Jerdon's Leafbird, Yellow-crowned Woodpecker, Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker etc. Also, watch out for winter migrants as the season is around.

This will be a half-day trip, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Covid protocols will be followed; please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. New Deccan Birders hats and caps will be available for purchase; please carry adequate cash.

Brief Report: Deccan Birders Annual General Body Meeting, September 14, 2024

JVD Moorty

The audience at the AGM (Photo: Gokul Krishna Addanki)

The 33rd Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of Deccan Birders was held on September 14, 2024, in the evening from 6:00PM onwards. The slight delay in beginning the meeting was due to the fact that the members could not reach the venue in time owing to Ganesh festivities causing traffic jams that were not anticipated on routes not taken earlier. The writer was one such victim.

The meeting began at 6:00PM and was promptly adjourned for lack of quorum. As per the byelaws, there was an adjournment of 15 minutes, and the members present assembled again to constitute the quorum and start the meeting.

The President, JVD Moorty, began the meeting by greeting the members present.

The minutes of the last AGM were then taken up and read through. A couple of points in those minutes were clarified by Srikanth Bhamidipati upon being queried by Aasheesh Pittie. The minutes were then deemed to have been accepted after they were proposed and seconded as such.

The Hon. Secretary, Srikanth Bhamidipati, then read out his report for the period 2022 to 2024, giving details of the field trips, outstation camps, conservation initiatives and project works taken up during the aforementioned period. An earnest appeal was made to the members requesting them to also contribute articles and trip reports to our monthly newsletter, the Pitta.

The Hon. Treasurer, Dr Krishna Nagarajan, put forth his presentation on the screen and explained the numbers and figures lucidly to the members taking it all in. The current auditors were named and it was decided unanimously that they would continue to be the auditors for Deccan Birders for a further period of two years. The accounts were then duly passed, as were the names of the auditors.

With this, the term of the existing committee came to an end. The returning officer, Sagarika Melkote, announced that there were no new nominations for membership in the Executive Committee and, as the existing committee of 10 members had indicated their interest and willingness to continue for a further period of two years, they were unanimously declared as re-elected. The names of the ten members thus re-elected were then read out.

Rajashekar Tummala made an appeal to have a Postal Cover released as Deccan Birders had already completed 40 years of existence across two avatars.

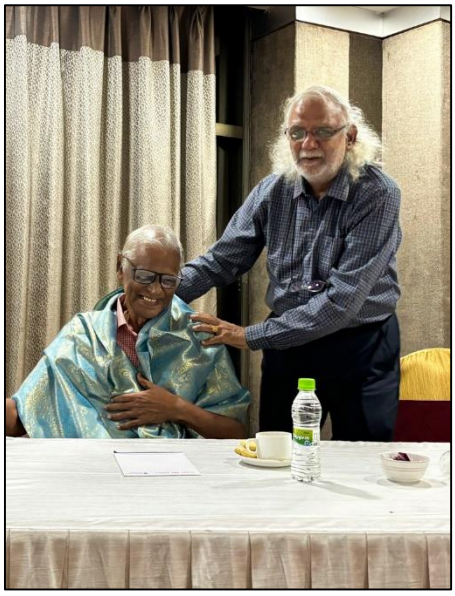
K Mrutyumjaya Rao addressing the audience (Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

Our Life Member, K Mrutyumjaya Rao, then took over and enthralled the audience with his brief Powerpoint presentation on his struggle as an environmentalist and conservationist. His zeal and passion were deeply appreciated by the audience.

Shafaat Ulla presenting a shawl to K Mrutyumjaya Rao
(Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

Aasheesh Pittie presenting a memento to K Mrutyumjaya Rao
(Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

He was honoured for his contribution to cause of bird and habitat conservation and, on behalf of Deccan Birders, he was presented with a silk shawl by our past Secretary, Shafaat Ulla, and a memento by past President, Aasheesh Pittie.



JVD Moorty greeting K Mrutyumjaya Rao
(Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

A section of the audience (Photo: Mohd Adnan Uddin)

The meeting then ended with a vote of thanks to the members who attended the meeting, all the people involved in organising the meeting and the staff of the hotel.

The participants at the AGM (Photo: Gokul Krishna Addanki)

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Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

(Received on WhatsApp, February 19, 2024)

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BIRDING WHILE TREKKING THROUGH BINSAR WLS

Trip Report: Binsar, Uttarakhand, May 18-20, 2024

Text & Photos: Dr Krishna Nagarajan

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon

"Really?" was my first reaction when I was informed that the only way to reach our home-stay in the buffer zone of Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary is by trekking 4km downhill from the nearest drop-off point. It immediately presented a mental picture of living in some remote area without electricity, cell phone coverage, and urban restroom facilities.

Our home-stay was located in a beautiful pristine village called Gaunap. Ours was a family trekking trip and my wife, Nikhila, was the trekking leader and planned the entire itinerary.

A view of Gaunap Village

The trip presented a great opportunity for birding. I checked eBird and found that around 200 species of birds have been reported in and around the Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary. As is always the case, there were multiple challenges: First, when I browsed the eBird checklists, I realized that I was totally unfamiliar with the birds in the region and did not have sufficient time to do the homework of reviewing the common resident birds in the region. I might have sighted most of these birds in my early birding days but not in the recent past and, as they say, out-of-sight means completely out-of-mind.

Second, trekking and birding simultaneously does not gel well together – ideally, you either do birding or do trekking. I was trying to do both and needed to be careful to not hegemonize a carefully planned trekking trip. I would have to rely on taking pictures as and when I sighted the birds during trekking, and study the birds offline to identify them.

Third, news from the Uttarakhand region reported severe forest fires in the month of April. Forest fires are common in summer and they usually get quickly contained naturally due to the presence of several streams within the forest. This year however was different – the region had had deficit rainfall and all the streams and local rivers had completely dried up. Although our trekking route was not affected by the forest fires, I was not sure about birding – the birds might have moved to other safer regions and this may limit the number of birds that I could sight during the hike.

Blue Whistling Thrush

On the first day, as soon as we started our hike towards the home-stay from the drop-off point, we were greeted by the Blue Whistling Thrush. The yellow bill, glistening blue body, with clear white dots on a curved line on the coverts made me temporarily forget the pain in the knees when hiking downhill!

Streaked Laughingthrush

Great Barbet

Green-backed Tit

By the time we completed the 4km hike to the home-stay, we had sighted the White-eared Bulbul, Streaked Laughingthrush, Red-vented Bulbul, Great Barbet, Green-backed Tit, Small Niltava (both male and female), Red-billed Leiothrix, and the Oriental White-eye.

Rufous-bellied Niltava female

Rufous-bellied Niltava male

Red-billed Leiothrix

We were pleasantly surprised upon reaching the Gaunap village. The village comprised only 9 families! It has electricity (with interruptions of course), cell phone coverage (not all the service providers though), modern restroom facilities (relief!) and a functional primary school run by a single teacher who lives in the village (even though only 4 kids currently attend the school).

On the second day we trekked in and around the Gaunap village. We visited a temple on top of the hill, walked around and greeted the entire village (remember only 9 families), and covered some local hills. Our trekking guide was quite knowledgeable and helped identify the birds.

Grey Bushchat male

Slaty-headed Parakeet

Oriental Turtle Dove

Besides the usual widespread residents (House Sparrow, Spotted Dove, House Crow, Common Myna, Red-wattled Lapwing, and Blue Rock Pigeons), we spotted Rufous Sibia, Himalayan Bulbul, Grey Bushchat, Little Pied Flycatcher, Slaty-headed Parakeet (unique yellowish long tail was interesting), Oriental Turtle Dove, and Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon.

Russet Sparrow male

Russet Sparrow female

Other birds we saw were Russet Sparrow (male and female), Black Drongo, Brown-fronted Woodpecker, Black Bulbul, Grey-winged Blackbird and a Crested Serpent Eagle soaring in the sky.

On the third and final day, our way out of Gaunap village was a moderate 9km hike to a small town called Dhoulchhina. Our focus was to get to the destination as soon as possible to minimize the exposure to the summer heat.

Grey-headed Woodpecker

Himalayan Woodpecker

Black-headed Jay

Verditer Flycatcher

During the hike, besides the birds spotted on the previous day, we also spotted the Grey-headed Woodpecker, Himalayan Woodpecker, Verditer Flycatcher, and Black-headed Jay.

Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler

Black Francolin

Many other birds were also seen: Ultramarine Flycatcher, Grey-hooded Warbler, Black-throated Tit, Tickell's Thrush, Yellow-bellied Warbler, Eurasian Jay, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler, Black Francolin, Plumbeous Water Redstart, White-throated Laughingthrush, Red-billed Blue Magpie, Maroon Oriole, Scaly-bellied Woodpecker, and the Yellow-crowned Woodpecker.

Plumbeous Water Redstart

My bird of this trekking trip is the Rufous Sibia. This was my first sighting of this bird, and it took me some time to glance over all the plates in the Grimmett book to identify this one – a very satisfying feeling!

Rufous Sibia

The list of birds sighted in this trip is as follows:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Oriental White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*	24	Oriental Turtle Dove	*Streptopelia orientalis*
2	Blue Whistling Thrush	*Myophonus caeruleus*	25	Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon	*Treron sphenurus*
3	Streaked Laughingthrush	*Trochalopteron lineatum*	26	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
4	Green-backed Tit	*Parus monticolus*	27	Grey-winged Blackbird	*Turdus boulboul*
5	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	28	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*
6	Rufous-bellied Niltava	*Niltava sundara*	29	Brown-fronted Woodpecker	*Dendrocoptes auriceps*
7	Red-billed Leiothrix	*Leiothrix lutea*	30	Grey-headed Woodpecker	*Picus canus*
8	Great Barbet	*Psilopogon virens*	31	Himalayan Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos himalayensis*
9	Himalayan Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucogenys*	32	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*
10	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	33	Ultramarine Flycatcher	*Ficedula superciliaris*
11	White-eared Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucotis*	34	Black-headed Jay	*Garrulus lanceolatus*
12	Black Bulbul	*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*	35	Eurasian Jay	*Garrulus glandarius*
13	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	36	Grey-hooded Warbler	*Phylloscopus xanthoschistos*
14	Russet Sparrow	*Passer rutilans*	37	Yellow-bellied Warbler	*Abroscopus superciliaris*
15	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	38	Tickell's Thrush	*Turdus unicolor*
16	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	39	Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler	*Megapomatorhinus erythrogenys*
17	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	40	Black Francolin	*Francolinus francolinus*
18	Blue Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	41	Plumbeous Water Redstart	*Phoenicurus fuliginosus*
19	Rufous Sibia	*Heterophasia capistrata*	42	White-throated Laughingthrush	*Ianthocincla albogularis*
20	Grey Bushchat	*Saxicola ferreus*	43	Red-billed Blue Magpie	*Urocissa erythroryncha*
21	Little Pied Flycatcher	*Ficedula westermanni*	44	Scaly-bellied Woodpecker	*Picus squamatus*
22	Slaty-headed Parakeet	*Psittacula himalayana*	45	Maroon Oriole	*Oriolus traillii*
23	Verditer Flycatcher	*Eumyias thalassinus*			

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A TRIP TO THE REALM OF KINGS AND DACOITS

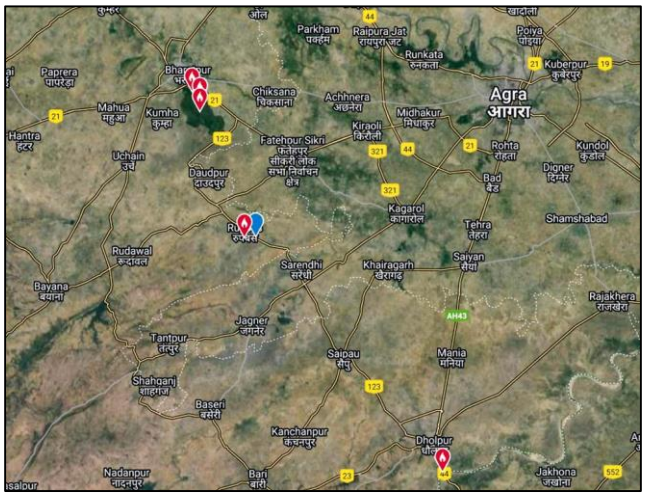
Trip Report: Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary & National Chambal Sanctuary, February 22-24, 2024

Text & Photos: Aditya Rao

A view of Bharatpur wetlands from the watchtower

INTRODUCTION

Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, also known as Keoladeo Ghana National Park, is a national park located on the outskirts of Bharatpur, Rajasthan. It was declared a national park in 1982 and a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985. Additionally, since it is a large wetland, it was designated a Ramsar site in 1981.



Map showing Bharatpur and other sites visited
(Source: ebird.org & google.com)

BACKGROUND

Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan

The sanctuary spans over 29 sq.km and features a diverse ecosystem of wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands. It originated in the late 19th century when the Maharaja of Bharatpur created a hunting reserve by diverting water from a nearby river. This artificially created wetland attracted a plethora of bird species, turning it into a prime bird-watching destination.

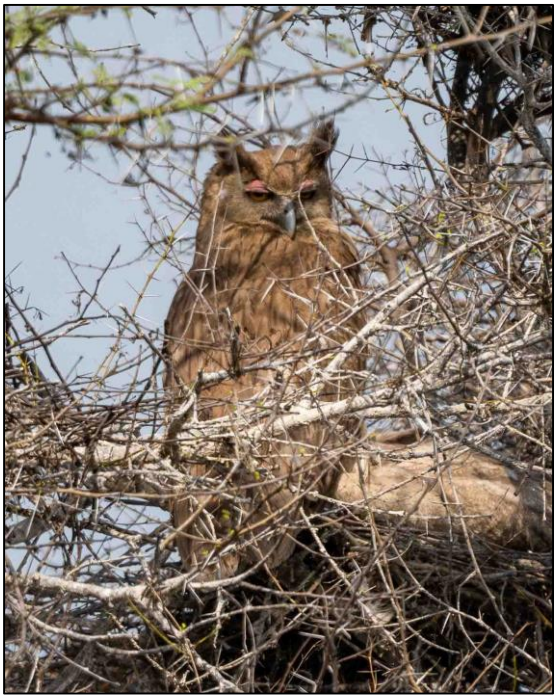
The sanctuary's name, Keoladeo, is derived from an ancient Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Shiva, situated within its premises. Over the years, it has become a haven for over 370 species of birds, including both resident and migratory species. The park was particularly famous for its significant population of Siberian cranes, which used to migrate here in winter; in the past couple of decades though, there have been no sightings of these magnificent birds, possibly due to habitat loss and hunting along migratory routes. Having said that, it is still a much preferred wintering destination for a large number of bird species.

Besides birds, the sanctuary is home to various animals, including deer, boar, jackals, and turtles, making it a crucial site for biodiversity conservation in India.

Spotted Deer

Indian Jackal

Nilgai



Dusky Eagle Owl

Water Rail

National Chambal Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh

The National Chambal Sanctuary, also known as the Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, is a prominent wildlife sanctuary situated along the Chambal River in northern India. Spanning the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, it covers an area of approximately 5,400 square kilometers. The sanctuary was established in 1979 primarily to protect the critically endangered Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), a unique crocodilian species endemic to the Indian subcontinent, as well as other threatened aquatic species.

Gharial male

The Chambal River, which originates in the Vindhya Range and flows north-northeast through Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh before merging with the Yamuna River, provides a pristine and unpolluted habitat crucial for the survival of its diverse fauna. The sanctuary's creation marked a significant conservation effort in response to the alarming decline in Gharial populations due to habitat destruction, poaching, and illegal sand mining.

Gharial female

Gharial juvenile

Historically, the Chambal region has been steeped in folklore and legend, often associated with dacoits and bandits. Its rugged and ravine-riddled terrain made it a natural hideout for these outlaws, adding a layer of mystique to the sanctuary. Today, this same ruggedness has helped preserve its natural environment, making it one of the least polluted river ecosystems in India.

The sanctuary is not only a stronghold for the Gharial but also supports a variety of other species. The critically endangered Red-crowned Roof Turtle *(Batagur kachuga*) and the vulnerable Smooth-coated Otter (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) are notable residents.

Red-crowned Roof Turtle (*Batagur kachuga*)

Desert Fox (*Vulpes vulpes pusilla*)

Additionally, the riverine ecosystem hosts a rich avian population, including species like the Egyptian Vulture, Indian Skimmer, Black-bellied Tern, and Sarus Crane, making it an important bird area.

Egyptian Vulture

Conservation efforts within the sanctuary have included breeding programs, habitat restoration, and strict anti-poaching measures. Collaborative initiatives between the government, non-governmental organizations, and local communities have been essential in sustaining these efforts. The sanctuary also promotes eco-tourism, offering activities such as river safaris and bird watching, which help raise awareness and funds for ongoing conservation projects.

In recent years, the sanctuary has faced challenges such as water extraction for irrigation, illegal sand mining, and pollution from upstream industrial activities. Despite these threats, the National Chambal Sanctuary remains a vital refuge for some of India's most endangered wildlife, exemplifying the country's commitment to biodiversity preservation and the importance of protecting its natural heritage.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Scenic walkways adjoining the lake

Seating arrangements enable people to sit and absorb the serenity of the lake

I found Bharatpur to be particularly interesting due to its well-organized facilities. The park features efficient ticketing systems, well-maintained pathways, and designated rickshaw pullers who are authorized by the park itself. These rickshaw pullers, who now use battery-operated rickshaws instead of the traditional pedal-powered ones, have extensive knowledge about the birds and can guide visitors to spots where rare birds are often found. Although the new rickshaws are less comfortable due to their lack of suspension, they are environmentally friendly.

Entire park is dotted with *Salvadora persica* or Toothbrush Tree, aka Miswak

For first-time visitors without a guide, hiring a local rickshaw puller is highly recommended. These pullers are registered and authorized, ensuring a knowledgeable and reliable tour of the sanctuary.

Hot lunch delivered to designated eating spots by the hotel

Indian Scops Owl pair often seen near the eating area

MY TRIP

This visit to Bharatpur was a short extension of my official trip to Jaipur. The journey from Jaipur to Bharatpur takes about three hours by road, with excellent roads leading up to Bharatpur. There are well-established hotels catering to the birding community where visitors can stay.

I spent about two and a half days in Bharatpur. The first day was entirely dedicated to birding within the sanctuary, focusing on resident water birds.

View of Chambal River from the boat

On the second morning, I traveled to Chambal National Reserve on the Chambal River for a boat safari. This safari aimed to spot endangered birds such as the Indian Skimmers and Black-bellied Terns, as well as the Gharial, which are a must-see at Chambal.

Indian Skimmer

Black-bellied Tern

Once known for dacoity and looting, the Chambal valley is a lot more peaceful now, with these activities having been eliminated or significantly reduced. However, sand mafias are still said to operate at scale, making conservation of Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*) and the Mugger Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) very difficult. This is one of the very few sites where you can spot these fantastic reptiles in large numbers.

The Chambal riverside, allegedly a scene of rampant sand mining

I returned to Bharatpur the same afternoon and spent the rest of the day birding. Although it wasn't summer, the afternoons were quite warm. Being my last day, I had only half a day in Bharatpur before heading back to Jaipur for my connecting flight home, and I was keen to make the most of it.

Bluethroat

Indian Jackal protecting its territory

Moustached Warbler

One enthralling experience was watching a near war between a Crested Serpent Eagle and a Woolly-necked Stork. In general, I observed that whenever a raptor made a kill and came to ground to eat it, several other birds would start circling the area, waiting for an opportunity to steal the kill.

Black Kite & Woolly-necked Stork trying to steal kill from Crested Serpent Eagle

On this occasion, I saw the Crested Serpent Eagle catch a very large snake (possibly a Rat Snake). Immediately a few other birds started flying around the area, but this also invited a large Woolly-necked Stork, which pecked at and eventually managed to chase away the Crested Serpent Eagle and steal the prey.

Snake making a last-ditch attempt to escape before being swallowed by Woolly-necked Stork

The pond known locally as Darter pond is where one can find the most numbers of Oriental Darters. Here we can see lots of Darters hunting for fish and trying to consume them through harpooning and the characteristic tossing to align the fish correctly and get it to go down head first.

Oriental Darter

Indian Spotted Eagle

White-tailed Lapwing

Bharatpur's rich and diverse avifauna attracts numerous birders from around the world, especially from Europe and North America who spend significant amounts of time birding in the sanctuary. This visit was a memorable and enriching experience, and I would highly recommend it to anyone interested in birdwatching or wildlife conservation.

Baillon's Crake

Common Chiffchaff

The full list of birds seen at Chambal & Rupbas:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*	17	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
2	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	18	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*
3	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	19	Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*
4	Little Swift	*Apus affinis*	20	Egyptian Vulture	*Neophron percnopterus*
5	Great Thick-knee	*Esacus recurvirostris*	21	Bonelli's Eagle	*Aquila fasciata*
6	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	22	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*
7	River Lapwing	*Vanellus duvaucelii*	23	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*
8	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	24	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
9	Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*	25	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
10	Pallas's Gull	*Ichthyaetus ichthyaetus*	26	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
11	Indian Skimmer	*Rynchops albicollis*	27	Indian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*
12	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	28	Brown Rock Chat	*Oenanthe fusca*
13	Black-bellied Tern	*Sterna acuticauda*	29	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
14	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	30	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
15	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	31	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*
16	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*			

Some other photographs taken at Chambal & Rupbas:

Crested Lark

Bank Myna

Indian Roller

Indian Courser

Common Redshank

Desert Wheatear

Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse

Some other photographs taken at Chambal:

Indian Skimmer

Osprey

Pallas's Gull

River Tern

Great Thick-knee

Brown Rock Chat

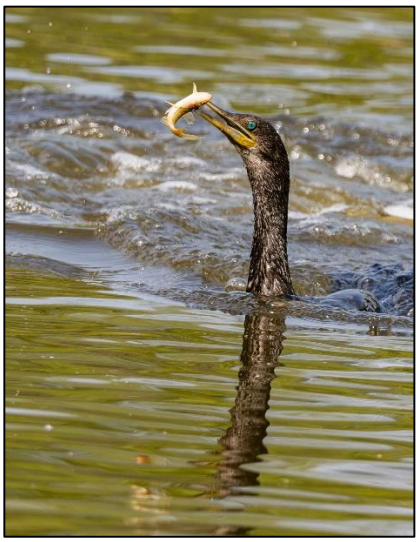
The full list of birds seen at Bharatpur:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	53	Asian Woolly-necked Stork	*Ciconia episcopus*
2	Bar-headed Goose	*Anser indicus*	54	Black-necked Stork	*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*
3	Greylag Goose	*Anser anser*	55	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*
4	Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*	56	Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*
5	Cotton Pygmy-goose	*Nettapus coromandelianus*	57	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*
6	Garganey	*Spatula querquedula*	58	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*
7	Northern Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*	59	Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*
8	Gadwall	*Mareca strepera*	60	Black Bittern	*Ixobrychus flavicollis*
9	Eurasian Wigeon	*Mareca penelope*	61	Black-crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*
10	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	62	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*
11	Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*	63	Striated Heron	*Butorides striata*
12	Green-winged Teal	*Anas crecca*	64	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola greyii*
13	Common Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	65	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus*
14	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	66	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*
15	Grey Francolin	*Ortygornis pondicerianus*	67	Medium Egret	*Ardea inter*
16	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	68	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*
17	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	69	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*
18	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	70	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*
19	Red Collared Dove	*Streptopelia tranquebarica*	71	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*
20	Spotted Dove	*Spilopelia chinensis*	72	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*
21	Laughing Dove	*Spilopelia senegalensis*	73	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*
22	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	*Treron phoenicopterus*	74	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*
23	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	*Pterocles exustus*	75	Egyptian Vulture	*Neophron percnopterus*
24	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	76	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*
25	Little Swift	*Apus affinis*	77	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*
26	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	78	Indian Spotted Eagle	*Clanga hastata*
27	Water Rail	*Rallus aquaticus*	79	Greater Spotted Eagle	*Clanga clanga*
28	Eurasian Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	80	Booted Eagle	*Hieraaetus pennatus*
29	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	81	Steppe Eagle	*Aquila nipalensis*
30	Grey-headed Swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	82	Bonelli's Eagle	*Aquila fasciata*
31	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	83	Western Marsh Harrier	*Circus aeruginosus*
32	Ruddy-breasted Crake	*Zapornia fusca*	84	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*
33	Baillon's Crake	*Zapornia pusilla*	85	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*
34	Sarus Crane	*Antigone antigone*	86	Indian Scops Owl	*Otus bakkamoena*
35	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	87	Dusky Eagle Owl	*Ketupa coromanda*
36	Pied Avocet	*Recurvirostra avosetta*	88	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*
37	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	89	Eurasian Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*
38	White-tailed Lapwing	*Vanellus leucurus*	90	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*
39	Kentish Plover	*Anarhynchus alexandrinus*	91	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*
40	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*	92	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*
41	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	93	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*
42	Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	94	Asian Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*
43	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	95	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
44	Green Sandpiper	*Tringa ochropus*	96	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*
45	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	97	Brown-headed Barbet	*Psilopogon zeylanicus*
46	Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*	98	Black-rumped Flameback	*Dinopium benghalense*
47	Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	99	Eurasian Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*
48	Ruff	*Calidris pugnax*	100	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
49	Temminck's Stint	*Calidris temminckii*	101	Common Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
50	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	102	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
51	Indian Courser	*Cursorius coromandelicus*	103	Ashy Drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*
52	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	104	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
105	Bay-backed Shrike	*Lanius vittatus*	127	Indian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*
106	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*	128	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*
107	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	129	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*
108	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	130	Bank Myna	*Acridotheres ginginianus*
109	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*	131	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*
110	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*	132	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
111	Oriental Skylark	*Alauda gulgula*	133	Bluethroat	*Luscinia svecica*
112	Crested Lark	*Galerida cristata*	134	Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*
113	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	135	Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*
114	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	136	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
115	Plain Prinia	*Prinia inornata*	137	Desert Wheatear	*Oenanthe deserti*
116	Sykes's Warbler	*Iduna rama*	138	Brown Rock Chat	*Oenanthe fusca*
117	Moustached Warbler	*Acrocephalus melanopogon*	139	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
118	Clamorous Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus stentoreus*	140	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*
119	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*	141	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*
120	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	142	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*
121	White-eared Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucotis*	143	Western Yellow Wagtail	*Motacilla flava*
122	Common Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*	144	Citrine Wagtail	*Motacilla citreola*
123	Lesser Whitethroat	*Curruca curruca*	145	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*
124	Yellow-eyed Babbler	*Chrysomma sinense*	146	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*
125	Large Grey Babbler	*Argya malcolmi*	147	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*
126	Jungle Babbler	*Argya striata*			

Some other photographs taken at Bharatpur:

White-eared Bulbul



Indian Cormorant with catch

Black-necked Stork

Steppe Eagle

Black Bittern

Green-winged Teal

Bar-headed Goose

Sarus Crane

Striated Heron

Common Tailorbird

Northern Shoveler

Purple Sunbird male

Common Kingfisher

Common Woodshrike

Jungle Babbler

Oriental Darter

Black Bittern

Grey Heron

Grey Francolin

Paddyfield Pipit

Painted Stork

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Streaked Spiderhunter (*Arachnothera magna*)

Streaked Spiderhunter (Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, January 13, 2024)

Order:	Passeriformes
Family:	Nectariniidae
Genus:	*Arachnothera*
Species:	*A. magna*
Size:	19 cm

Description & distribution: The Streaked Spiderhunter is a distinctive bird in its range, coloured golden yellowish olive with a long, curved, black bill, specifically adapted for a nectar diet, and yellow-orange legs and feet. It is boldly marked with heavy streaking on its olive-yellow upperparts and white or pale yellow underparts. The tail is greenish and has a dark sub-terminal band and is tipped with buff spots. In juvenile birds, the feathers are slightly more filamentous than in later plumages due to lower barb densities, and juvenile remiges, primary coverts, aula, and rectrices are relatively narrow, browner, and tapered or rounded at the tips.

The Streaked Spiderhunter is resident in most parts of its range, from the eastern states of India and the eastern Himalayas practically all across Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, and Vietnam. It is not migratory, but does show vertical movements in the hills.

Habitat & behaviour: The Streaked Spiderhunter is usually seen singly or in pairs, but may move around with mixed flocks. It is a large and noisy inhabitant of tropical and subtropical moist lowland or montane forests, dense evergreen forests, and abandoned cultivation (especially those holding wild banana trees). Flight is somewhat woodpecker-like, undulating over longer distances. While it relishes the nectar of the wild banana blossom, it also takes spiders – sometimes hovering to take them even from the centre of their webs – and may also glean invertebrates from foliage. It calls frequently, giving out a loud, sharp, decisive-sounding *chirirk, chiririrk*, in flight or while feeding. The song is a soft, monotonous *vijvitte vij*.

Nesting: The Streaked Spiderhunter breeds mainly between March and July. The nest is an inverted dome of skeleton leaves tied together with cobwebs, and usually fixed on the urderside of a large leaf. The usual clutch consists of 2 or 3 brown eggs, which are darker at the broad end. Nest-building and incubation duties are shared by both parents.

Local name: The Streaked Spiderhunter is known as *'Dom-siriok-pho'* in Lepcha and *'Ydong-pichang'* in Bhutia.

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